The University of Chicago

SWIFT'S ECONOMIC VIEWS AND MERCANTILISM

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

AUGUST, 1941

By

LOUIS A. LANDA

Reprinted from
A Journal of English Literary History
Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1943

The University of Chicago

SWIFT'S ECONOMIC VIEWS AND MERCANTILISM

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
AUGUST, 1941

By
LOUIS A. LANDA

Reprinted from
A Journal of English Literary History
Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1943

R. UNIV
BIBLIOTHEEK
LEIDEN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/IA41533907_0049

[Reprinted from *ELH, A Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1943.]

SWIFT'S ECONOMIC VIEWS AND MERCANTILISM

By Louis A. Landa

Commentators on Swift have traditionally, and quite properly, called attention to his preference for the landed interest of Great Britain, an attitude, it is usually pointed out, that stems from his Toryism. This view of Swift was, of course, current in his own day. Witness the words of one of his contemporaries, the anonymous author of *Torism and Trade Can Never Agree* (*ca.* 1713), who attacked *The Examiner*—i. e., Swift—as a "Daemon of Torism" who "never fail'd to maul" the trading interest or eulogize the landed interest.

> Can we imagine that Persons who have two such Interests on their side, as a *Church Interest* and a *Land Interest* will be mindful of so Paltry an interest as Trade. The *Examiner*, who was possess'd more than any Man with the *Daemon* of *Torism*, was always launching out in his Panegyricks on the *Land Interest* and *Church Interest*, and tho he had not quite Front enough to stand by what his old Friend Castlemain said, that we should have no *Trade at all*, yet he never fail'd to maul it when ever it fell in his way.[1]

The purely partisan intention in this pamphlet—it is a violent attack on the French trade and the Tory sponsored commercial treaty with France at the Treaty of Utrecht—discredits the author's words; yet the equations set up, in which Toryism and land or Whiggism and trade become interchangeable terms, have often been accepted in modern scholarship, to the obscuration of the many individual differences that prevailed in the eighteenth century. Tories who defended the primacy of trade were not by any means as numerous as Whigs, but they did exist—for example, Sir Dudley North, Sir Josiah Child, and Charles Davenant, to mention three obvious instances. There

[1] P. 16. "Trade" is used in this pamphlet—and throughout this article—in one of the usual eighteenth-century acceptations: foreign trade. Although I have been unable to trace the remark of Swift's "Old Friend Castlemain," the allusion must be to the husband of the mistress of Charles II. Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemain (1634-1705), an ardent apologist for Catholicism and a member of a secret council to James II, was tried for complicity in the Popish Plot. By linking Swift with him (there is not, so far as I am aware, any evidence that the two were acquainted), the author of the pamphlet was making the usual implication that Tories and Papists are one and the same.

is no reason to believe that these staunch Tories assumed in the eyes of their contemporaries a particulay anomalous or heterodox position, such as would logically be imposed on them by the oversimplified distinctions and formulae of scholars who are tempted to accept at face value the Whiggish insistence of our anonymous author, that " the *Tories* will, upon all Occasions, be Enemies to Trade." [2]

Swift, too, has suffered from the obscuration of individual differences. By insisting that he was a Tory in Church and a Whig in politics,[3] he himself protested against being enclosed within the confines of a term, a formula, a single group, although no one was more culpable in utilizing this device against opponents, as witness his persistent identification of Whigs with dissenters and Presbyterians with antimonarchists. In any case, the traditional view of Swift as a supporter of the Tory landed interest, true as it is and deserving of emphasis, need not preclude some emphasis on the importance with which he viewed trade. Indeed, Swift has not been given sufficient credit for his very strong realization of the importance of trade in the economy of a nation. This realization, it is true, came only belatedly out of his residence in Ireland after 1714; still he was no less wholehearted in his acceptance of certain principles of trade as necessary to Ireland or England's welfare than the most ardent Whig. These principles and the assumptions underlying them are constantly iterated in his Irish tracts; and on their application to Ireland's economy, as well as on the utili-

[2] *Torism and Trade Can Never Agree* (London, n. d.), p. 1. Cf. Swift's attributing to the Whigs a maxim " dangerous to the constitution ": ". . . that of preferring, on all occasions, the moneyed interest before the landed " (*The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, D. D.*, ed. Temple Scott, 12 vols. [London, 1897-1908], 9. 231, hereafter referred to as *Works*). There were, of course, Whigs as well as Tories among the landed gentry; and from this group came frequent pleas that trading restrictions on wool be lifted for the welfare of the nation. They were not, in their capacity as landed gentlemen, opposed to trade as such; they were opposed to restrictions on trade that penalized the landed interest and favored the manufacturer and the merchant who exported finished goods. The Tories who favored trade with France were accused of being hostile to the trading interest; and we get the spectacle of Daniel Defoe being called an enemy to trade and the trading interest by the author of *Torism and Trade Can Never Agree*. It will be recalled, too, that the East India Company in Swift's day received strong Tory support. Here is a flagrant instance in which " Torism and Trade " did agree.

[3] *Works*, 3. 314; 5. 65. Cf. also *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D. D.*, ed. F. Elrington Ball (London, 1910-14), 2. 279, 354.

zation of the land, Swift believed the welfare of the country depended. It will serve as a corrective to the conception of Swift as wholly of the landed Tory interest to examine his major ideas about trade, so often casual and unelaborated, and to relate them to the dominant economic theory of his day, that complex of ideas which Adam Smith attacked under the name of the commercial or mercantile system.[4]

2.

Swift viewed problems of trade from the vantage of a small country lacking freedom of action and occupying, more or less, the status of a colony subject to restrictive colonial measures. It was this fact that stimulated him to concern himself with economic problems at all and to seek a sound economic solution consistent with the harsh realities of Ireland's dependency; and from this fact is, of course, derived the emotional tone of his tracts on trade. From 1720, when the first of these tracts appeared, to the end of his active writing career, he tirelessly, though rather hopelessly, protested England's restrictions on Ireland's trade. A passage from *A Short View of the State of Ireland* (1728) is typical:

Ireland is the only Kingdom I ever heard or read of, either in ancient or modern story, which was denied the liberty of exporting

[4] There has been little attempt by scholars to relate Swift's economic views to contemporary economic theories. In "A Modest Proposal and Populousness," *Modern Philology*, 40 (1942). 161-70, the present writer has related *A Modest Proposal* to prevailing theories of population. The same tract was related to the economic background by George Wittkowsky in his article, "Swift's *Modest Proposal*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (1943). 75-104. An article by J. M. Hone, "Berkeley and Swift as National Economists," *Studies*, 23 (1934). 420-32, is almost wholly devoted to the views of Berkeley. The few casual remarks about Swift are primarily to contrast him with Berkeley. Without elaboration or proof Hone writes that "Swift had learned his economics from his patron, Sir William Temple, a doctrinaire of that mercantilist school which Berkeley wished to refute."

The historian of ideas who wishes to trace the ramifications of mercantilist thought will find the following secondary sources, which I have listed in chronological order, of great value: E. S. Furniss, *The Position of the Laborer in a System of Nationalism* (Boston and New York, 1920); Br. Suviranta, *The Theory of the Balance of Trade* (Helsingfors, 1923); E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England* (London, 1931); Eli F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, tr. Mendel Shapiro (London, 1935); E. A. V. Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith* (New York, 1937); Jacob Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade* (New York and London, 1937); Philip W. Buck, *The Politics of Mercantilism* (New York, 1942).

their native commodities and manufactures wherever they pleased, except to countries at war with their own Prince or State, yet this by the superiority of mere power is refused us in the most momentous parts of commerce, besides an Act of Navigation to which we never consented, pinned down upon us, and rigorously executed, and a thousand other unexampled circumstances as grievous as they are invidious to mention.[5]

These protests were not limited to works intended for publication. They appear in his private correspondence,[6] and he even issued them from the pulpit. One of his few sermons to come down to us, *On the Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland,* is devoted to an analysis of Ireland's economic difficulties, in which he complains bitterly that " The first cause of our misery is the intolerable hardships we lie under in every branch of trade, by which we are become as hewers of wood, and drawers of water, to our rigorous neighbours." [7]

The discriminatory acts against which Swift wrote began after the Restoration and were part of the vigorous protectionist policy for home industries. Ireland was simply one of many victims. The Navigation Acts to which he often refers dated from 1663.[8] They constituted a series of enactments designed to make more difficult and expensive the importation into Ireland of commodities from the colonies and exportation from Ireland to the colonies. The Cattle Acts of the same period reduced drastically a thriving trade between England and Ireland in cattle and animal products, to the detriment of Irish raisers of cattle, sheep, and swine.[9] At the end of the

[5] *Works,* 7. 85-86; for similar complaints see also *Works,* 6. 201; 7. 66, 100, 138, 157 ff., 195, 198, 220.

[6] For example, *Correspondence,* 3. 311.

[7] *Works,* 4. 212.

[8] The chief Navigation Acts which crippled the Irish trade were 15 Charles II, c. 7; 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 26; 7 & 8 William III, c. 22. For a contemporary discussion of the early navigation laws and other Acts affecting Ireland, see *Britannia Languens* (1680), sec. xi, generally credited to William Petyt, reprinted in *A Select Collection of Early English Tracts on Commerce,* ed. J. R. McCulloch (London, 1856), pp. 275-504. See also John Hely Hutchinson, *The Commercial Restraints of Ireland,* ed. W. G. Carroll (London, 1888), pp. 118 ff.; George O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin and London, 1918), pp. 173 ff.; Lawrence A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws* (New York, 1939), pp. 162-63, 397.

[9] The Cattle Acts were 15 Charles II, c. 8; 18 Charles II, c. 23; 20 Charles II, c. 7; 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 2; 32 Charles II, c. 2. See A. E. Murray, *A History*

seventeenth century came the restriction which Swift terms "this fatal act," 10 & 11 Wm. III, c. 10, designed to prevent the Irish woolen industry from competing with English growers and manufacturers by prohibiting the exportation of woolen goods from Ireland to any country except England. These discriminatory acts, which seemed so unjust to Swift and other Irishmen, were viewed in a different light by the English, who merely had been putting into effect the prevailing mercantilist principle that a colony or dependent nation is intended to serve the national economic interest of the mother country.

The colonial relationship between England and Ireland by which English mercantilists justified their treatment of Ireland was expounded at length at the end of the seventeenth century by John Cary, famous merchant of Bristol and a correspondent of John Locke:

> We come now to speak of *Ireland*; which of all the Plantations setled by the *English* hath proved most injurious to the Trade of this Kingdom, and so far from answering the ends of a Colony, that it doth wholly violate them; for if People be the Wealth of a Nation, then 'tis certain that a bare parting with any of them cannot be its Advantage, unless accompanied with Circumstances whereby they may be rendered more useful both to themselves, and also to those they left behind them, else so far as you deprive it of such who should consume its Product and improve its Manufactures you lessen its true Interest, especially when that Colony sets up a Separate, and not only provides sufficient of both for its self, but by the Overplus supplys other Markets, and thereby lessens its Sales abroad. . . .
>
> Nor is there any reason to be offered why *Ireland* should have greater Liberty than *our other Plantations* [italics mine], the inhabitants whereof have an equal Desire to a free Trade, forgetting that the first design of their Settlement was to advance the Interest of England, against whom no Arguments can be used which will not equally hold good against *Ireland*.
>
> 1. As it was settled by Colonies spared from *England*.
>
> 2. As it hath been still supported and defended at the Charge of *England*.
>
> 3. As it hath received equal Advantages with the other Plantations from the Expence *England* hath been at in carrying on Wars Abroad and Revolutions at Home . . . so that 'twould be a piece of great Ingratitude for the Free-holders of *Ireland* unwillingly to

of the Commercial and Financial Relations between England and Ireland from the Restoration (London, 1903), pp. 23 ff.

submit to any thing whereby the Interest of England may be advanced. . . .[10]

Cary's words are echoed by Charles Davenant, who maintained that Ireland is England's colony " by the Interpretation both of Law and Reason " and that " it seems the Right of *England*, and as well for the Benefit of *Ireland* its best and noblest Colony, that the Legislative Authority here should . . . make such Regulations and Restrictions, relating to Trade especially, as shall be thought for the Weal-Publick of both Countries." [11]

These are merely statements of the old colonial policy as it was also being applied to the American colonies, and thus the English had accepted economic dogma as their support when they restricted or abolished those branches of Irish trade and industry which operated to the disadvantage of English trade and industry. Even those who were moved by a genuine consideration for the ills of Ireland did not question the rightness of this principle, for example, Swift's patron, Sir William Temple, whose *Essay upon the Advancement of Trade in Ireland* appeared in 1673:

. . . one Thing must be taken notice of as peculiar to this Country [Ireland], which is, That as it is the Nature of its Government, so in the very improvement of its Trade and Riches, it ought to be considered not only in its own proper Interest, but likewise in its Relation to *England*, to which it is subordinate, and upon whose Weal in the main that of this Kingdom depends, and therefore a Regard must be had of those Points wherein the Trade of *Ireland* comes to interfere with any main Branches of the Trade of *England*; in which Cases the Encouragement of such Trade ought to be either declined or moderated, and so give way to the Interest of Trade in *England*, upon the Health and Vigour whereof the

[10] *An Essay on the State of England, in Relation to Its Trade, Its Poor, and Its Taxes* (Bristol, 1695), pp. 89, 105-6. In *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (1698), William Molyneux, whose arguments for Ireland's independence impressed Swift, denied that Ireland " is to be look'd upon only as a *Colony* from *England*"—a view without the " least *Foundation* or *Colour* from *Reason* or *Record* (1720 ed., p. 125). Cary answered Molyneux on this point in *A Vindication of the Parliament of England, in Answer to a Book, Written by William Molyneux of Dublin, Esq.* (London, 1698), pp. 123-24; see also *An Answer to Mr. Molyneux* (London, 1698), pp. 140 ff., a work credited to Cary.

[11] *An Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Ballance of Trade* (London, 1699), pp. 106, 120.

Strength, Riches and Glory of his Majesty's Crown seems chiefly to depend.[12]

After the turn of the century the same view was set forth by Sir Francis Brewster, who argued for a union between Ireland and England, yet insisted in the same breath that even from union Ireland could not expect equality in matters economic: ". . . I do not mean, nor would insinuate, that all the Priviledges and Immunities *England* hath in Trade and Manufactures, should be allow'd to *Ireland*; but only encouraged in such a way as will advance *England* in theirs . . . ."[13] Among the Irish expounders of mercantilism in Swift's day was Arthur Dobbs, who pleaded for the removal of restrictive measures not so much on the grounds that such action would be right but that it would be more profitable: the people of Ireland "in the Possession of their Properties, Rights, and Privileges, *consistent with the good of its Mother Country* [italics mine] . . . will be of the greatest Moment to them, in contributing to support the Honour and Dignity of the Crown, and the Power, Wealth, and Naval Strength of Britain."[14]

Swift does not challenge the rightness of the mercantilist attitude toward a dependent kingdom or the justice of restricting a dependency in the interests of the mother country. To have done so, as he must have realized, would have been to run counter to widely accepted views. Instead he bases his arguments on another level—a constitutional one. Whatever his real interpretation of the constitutional relation between England and Ireland or his views of the respective rights of native Irish and Anglo-Irish,[15] he saw the necessity and per-

[12] *The Works of Sir William Temple* (London, 1731), 1.112-13.

[13] *New Essays on Trade* (London, 1702), pp. 75-76; cf. also p. 71.

[14] *An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland* (Dublin, 1729), p. 66. See also *Works*, 6.188, where Swift uses a similar argument: "I conceive this poor unhappy island to have a title to some indulgence from England; not only upon the score of Christianity, natural equity, and the general rights of mankind; but chiefly on account of that immense profit they receive from us; without which, that kingdom would make a very different figure in Europe, from what it doth at present." A similar attitude is expressed by the author of *Reflections upon the Present Unhappy Circumstances of Ireland; in a Letter to His Grace the Lord Arch Bishop of Cashel* (Dublin, 1731), pp. 4-5.

[15] In *The Intelligencer*, No. 19, he wrote: ". . . what is lawful for a subject of Ireland, I profess I cannot determine . . ." (*Works*, 9.327). Cf. also *The Drapier's Letters*: "Then I desire, for the satisfaction of the public, that you will please

suasiveness of arguing from the premise that the people of Ireland are in no way distinct from the people of England, that they are fellow subjects, citizens entitled to the same rights. His reliance upon this position is presented most elaborately in *The Drapier's Letters*, for example in his comment on the Report of the Committee of the Privy Council at that point where the Report refers to the " liberty or privilege of the King's subjects of Ireland." Swift challenges the implication that the liberty or privilege of the Irish subject is different from the liberty or privilege of the English subject:

> . . . in specifying the word *Ireland*, instead of saying ' His Majesty's subjects,' it would seem to insinuate that we are not upon the same foot with our fellow-subjects in *England*; which, however, the practice may have been, I hope will never be directly asserted, for I do not understand that Poining's act deprived us of our liberty, but only changed the manner of passing laws here . . . by leaving the negative to the two Houses of Parliament. But, waiving all controversies relating to the legislature, no person, I believe, was ever yet so bold as to affirm that the people of Ireland have not the same title to the benefits of the common law, with the rest of His Majesty's subjects, and therefore whatever liberties or privileges the people of England enjoy by common law, we of Ireland have the same; so that in my humble opinion, the word *Ireland* standing in that proposition, was, in the mildest interpretation, *a lapse of the pen*.[16]

In another of the *Drapier's Letters* he protests against ignorant and weak people who refer to Ireland as a " ' depending kingdom,' as if they would seem, by this phrase, to intend that the people of Ireland is in some state of slavery or dependence different from those of England." [17] There is no statute, Swift insists, that " makes Ireland depend upon England, any more than England does upon Ireland." All that can be said is that the two have the same king: " We have indeed obliged our-

to inform me why this country is treated in so very different a manner, in a point of such high importance; whether it be on account of Poining's act; of subordination; dependence; or any other term of art; which I shall not contest, but am too dull to understand " (*Works*, 6. 149). On the problem of Swift's attitude toward the native Irish and the Anglo-Irish, see Daniel Corkery, " Ourselves and Dean Swift," *Studies*, 23 (1934). 203-18. It is not altogether clear whether Swift wanted independence (that is, independence of action) for the " Whole People of Ireland " or merely for the English in Ireland.

[16] *Works*, 6. 77-78.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

selves to have the same king with them, and consequently they are obliged to have the same king with us." [18]

It was doubtless Swift's intention that these passages should be read as a challenge to the recent act of the English parliament which had affirmed in no uncertain terms the political dependency of Ireland.[19] If he had accepted this subordinate status for Ireland, he could not have made, given the prevalent mercantilist view that a dependency has only inferior economic rights, as strong a case against England's treatment of Ireland. The restrictive measures under such a relationship were both legal and conformable to economic dogma. Swift prefers, therefore, to blacken England by showing, not merely that the restrictive policies are short-sighted and unprofitable, but that they are constitutionally invalid because they are based upon force and upon an illegal denial of Irish rights as fellow-subjects. Thus we find him complaining, as a prelude to his analysis of Ireland's economic difficulties in his sermon *On the Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland*, that these difficulties "are not to be remedied, until God shall put it in the hearts of those who are stronger to allow us the common rights and privileges of brethern, fellow-subjects, and even of mankind." [20] In *A Short View of the State of Ireland* he writes that Ireland is prevented from exporting freely "by the superiority of mere power," and he adds: "It is too well known that we are forced to obey some laws we never consented to," a point he repeats

[18] *Ibid.* See also p. 126 and *The Answer to the Injured Lady*, where Swift writes: "That your family and tenants [Ireland] have no dependence upon the said gentleman [England], further than by the old agreement, which obligeth you to have the same steward, and to regulate your household by such methods as you should both agree to" (*Works*, 7.105).

[19] The Act was 6 George I, c. 5. Its language affirming the dependency of *Ireland* is unequivocal: "That the said kingdom of Ireland hath been, is, and of right ought to be subordinate unto and dependent upon the imperial crown of *Great Britain*, as being inseparably united and annexed thereunto; and that the King's majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal and commons of *Great Britain* in parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity, to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland" (*Statutes at Large* [Cambridge, 1765], 14.205).

[20] *Works*, 4.212. Swift adopts some of the language of William Molyneux, who had argued that Ireland's being bound "*by Acts of Parliament made in* England, *is against Reason, and the Common Rights of all Mankind*" (*op. cit.*, p. 127).

in *The Story of an Injured Lady*.[21] It was necessary to exercise caution in presenting this theme, as Swift well knew from the fate of the Drapier's *Fourth Letter*[22] and his first pamphlet on Irish economic matters, *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*,[23] both of which had been charged with sedition. Possibly here is the reason that Swift used the idea of independence with restraint; but he left little doubt that he believed, as he wrote to the Earl of Peterborough after an interview with Sir Robert Walpole in 1726, that Irishmen were being denied "a natural right of enjoying the privileges of subjects."[24]

3.

Much of Swift's comment on Ireland's economic condition is predicated on his belief that Ireland is potentially a great trading nation. In *The Drapier's Letters* he wrote that "we are denied the benefits which God and Nature intended to us; as manifestly appears by our happy situation for commerce, and the great number of our excellent ports."[25] In a later Irish tract he remarked on "the conveniency of ports and havens which Nature bestowed us so liberally," with the complaint that they are "of no more use to us, than a beautiful prospect to a man shut up in a dungeon."[26] Thus the onus is on England for not permitting the utilization of these natural resources. He also affirmed that Ireland possessed another requisite of a great trading nation, potential richness in native products. Ireland "is capable of producing all things necessary . . . sufficient for the support of four times the number of its inhabitants."[27] At another point he wrote: "As to the first cause of a Nation's riches, being the fertility of its soil, as well as the temperature of climate, we have no reason to complain . . . ."[28] And again: "Thus Ireland is the poorest of all

[21] *Works*, 7.86; cf. also pp. 84, 103; *Correspondence*, 3.311. Molyneux discusses "consent" at length (*op. cit.*, pp. 127-30).

[22] Cf. *The Drapier's Letters*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1935), pp. xli ff.

[23] Cf. Swift's letter to Pope, Jan. 10, 1721-22, in *Correspondence*, 3.113-16.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

[25] *Works*, 6.202. For the importance with which mercantilists viewed shipping, see Heckscher, *op. cit.*, 2.84 ff.

[26] *Works*, 7.85. [27] *Works*, 4.211. [28] *Works*, 7.85.

civilized countries in Europe, with every natural advantage to make it one of the richest." [29] In the expression of these views he was echoing sentiments expressed by such English observers as Sir William Temple, Sir William Petty, Sir Francis Brewster, as well as many Irishmen, among whom were John Browne and Bishop Berkeley.[30] One passage from *The Dublin Society's Weekly Observations* may be taken as representative:

> The natural soil of this Island, and the number and Ingenuity of its Inhabitants, would under proper management, make it as remarkable for Wealth as it now is for Poverty. There is no Country in the Northern Parts of *Europe* which it does not equal in Fertility, and most of them it remarkably excels. . . . No Kind of Growth, that can be rear'd under a Northern Sun, has miscarried in this Climate. . . .[31]

Although mercantilists stressed the primacy of manufactures and foreign trade, they had a definite realization of the importance of the land.[32] There was due recognition that land, linked with labor, constituted a significant factor in the wealth of a nation. As one writer on trade expressed it at the end of the seventeenth century: " Land is the Foundation, and regular Labour is the greatest Raiser of Riches." [33] The concern of the mercantilist for the land and its products was expounded at length by Charles Davenant, who prefaced his remarks with the statement: " *That Gold and Silver are indeed the Measure of Trade, but that the Spring and Original of it, in all Nations, is the Natural or Artifical Product of the Country; that is to say, what their Land, or what their Labour and Industry produces.*" [34] The fertility of soil was important, among other reasons, because a country could thereby provide for its in-

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[30] See *The Works of Sir William Temple* (London, 1731), 2.111; Sir William Petty, *Political Arithmetic*, in *Later Stuart Tracts*, ed. G. A. Aitken (Westminster, 1903), p. 30; Sir Francis Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 66; John Browne, *An Essay on Trade in General; and, on That of Ireland in Particular* (Dublin, 1728), pp. 38-39; George Berkeley, *The Querist* (1735), ed. J. M. Hone (Dublin and Cork, n. d.), Part 1, Nos. 130-33; Part 2, Nos. 2-3; Part 3, No. 2.

[31] (Dublin, 1739), 1.10-15.

[32] Cf. Buck, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[33] John Bellers, *Essays about the Poor, Manufactures, Trade, Plantations, and Immorality* (London, 1699), Preface.

[34] Davenant, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

habitants and at the same time have a surplus to be exported, particularly in manufactured form. Thus John Bellers declared: "Without we increase our Husbandry (by improving our land) we cannot increase our Manufactures, by which we should increase our Trade." [35] The great emphasis in mercantilist literature is on exportations; natural resources are viewed mainly with an eye to what they will contribute to foreign trade. That Swift could think and write like his mercantilist contemporaries is evident from a list of rules he set forth as "the true causes of any country's flourishing and growing rich." The first of these rules is relevant at this point: "The first cause of a Kingdon's thriving is the fruitfulness of the soil, to produce the necessaries and conveniences of life, not only sufficient for the inhabitants, but for exportation into other countries." [36]

It is particularly in his attitude toward exports and imports that Swift manifests his acceptance of prevalent English mercantilist theory. To a great extent his solutions for Ireland's economic problems are based on a fundamental mercantilist assumption, that importations are, economically speaking, an evil, that an excess of exports over imports—a favorable balance of trade—is the means by which a nation may be enriched. The expressions of this principle in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are numerous. "The ordinary means," wrote Thomas Mun in *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (1664), "to increase our wealth and treasure is by *Forraign trade*, wherein wee must ever observe this rule; to sell more to strangers yearly than we consume of theirs in value." [37] By the turn of the century the principle had been so widely enunciated that Sir Francis Brewster could write: "The Maxim is thread bare, *that no place can be Rich, where their Imports exceed their Exports*." [38] In Ireland Bishop Berkeley posed the question: "Whether that trade should not be accounted most pernicious wherein the Balance is most against us?" [39] The emphasis on exports and a favorable balance of trade is obvious; and the

[35] Bellers, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
[36] *Works*, 7. 83.
[37] Reprinted in *A Select Collection* . . . , ed. McCulloch, p. 125.
[38] Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
[39] Berkeley, *op. cit.*, Part 1, No. 167.

reasoning back of these general statements was as follows: if the imports from a foreign country to England exceed in value the exports to that country, an overbalance is created against England and in favor of that country, a situation which results in a flow of treasure into that country and the impoverishment of England; if, however, England's exports to that country exceed the imports, the balance is favorable and treasure flows in to enrich England. The concern of the mercantilist was in "the balance of payments" in the sense that one nation in its commercial relation with another incurs a net balance of indebtedness, an obligation to pay in specie. This flow of specie from one nation to another was signficant because of the importance attached to the national stock of money. Obviously the favorable balance of trade was a means of increasing that stock.[40] A succinct statement of this fundamental mercantilist attitude was set forth in *The British Merchant*, a repository of orthodox mercantilism, under the heading of "Propositions":

1. That the Prosperity and Happiness of this Kingdom depend very much upon our foreign Trade.

. . . . . .

3. That we gain Gold and Silver from those Countries which do not sell us so great a value of Manufactures as they take from us; for in this case the Balance must be paid in Money.

4. That we must pay a Balance in Money to such Countries as sell more Manufactures than they take from us; and that the capital Stock of Bullion is diminished by such a Commerce, unless the Goods we import from an over-balancing Country shall be re-exported.

5. That we are most enriched by those Countries which pay us the greatest Sums upon the Balance; and most impoverish'd by those which carry off the greatest Balance from us.[41]

[40] For discussions of the doctrine of the favorable balance of trade, see Suviranta, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 ff. and *passim*; Viner, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 ff.; Buck, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 ff. These works quote copiously from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century economic literature.

[41] [Charles King], *The British Merchant* (London, 1713; 3d ed., 1748), 1.18. This work has been called "the most unimpeachable exposition of mercantilist thought" (Lipson, *op. cit.*, 3.89-90). It was a collaborative Whig effort in answer to Defoe's *Mercator: or Commerce Retrieved*. Defoe was hired by Bolingbroke to defend the commercial treaty with France at the Treaty of Utrecht, and the Whigs countered with *The British Merchant*. The three-volume edition of 1721 was compiled by Charles King, London merchant and chamber-keeper to the Treasury. For a discussion of *The British Merchant*, see Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 141 ff.

This reasoning Swift accepted. It is to be found both implicit and explicit in his Irish tracts, not elaborated, of course, because he has no desire to theorize—and no need to justify theory that so widely prevailed. He could merely apply the balance of trade theory to a particular situation and expect his reader to see its logic. Thus he wrote in *The Present Miserable State of Ireland*: "Our exportations to England are very much overbalanced by our importations; so that the course of exchange is generally too high, and people choose rather to make their remittance in specie, than by a bill, and our nation is perpetually drained of its little running cash."[42] In the *Answer to the Craftsman* he proposed ironically that Irish trade be operated for the benefit of England because the English "have a just claim to the balance of trade on their side with the whole world."[43] And at various other points Ireland's trade with England is commented on with reference to its unfavorable balance.[44] The trade with France, on the contrary, received his approval, though hardly an enthusiastic one. ". . . If an original extract of the exports and imports be true, we have been gainers, upon the balance, by our trade with France, for several years past; and, although our gain amounts to no great sum, we ought to be satisfied, since we are no losers . . . ."[45] In *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* he credited the woolen trade with France with bringing in "the little money we have to pay our rents and go to market"; but he was disturbed, obviously thinking of Ireland's depleted stock of money, that the country was paying for French wines in specie.[46] By the same token he disapproved of Ireland's trade with "the northern nations" because with them the Irish are "obliged, instead of carrying woollen goods to their markets, and bringing home money, to purchase their commodities," whereas he approved the trades with France, Spain, and Portugal since they bring to Ireland "moydores, pistoles, and louis-

[42] *Works*, 7.162. Mr. Herbert Davis gave me convincing arguments that this tract is not by Swift, but they came too late for revision of my article. I have quoted from it only twice, and no point is dependent on these quotations. In any case, the tract reflects Swift's views as accurately as any he unquestionably wrote.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[44] For example, *ibid.*, pp. 112, 140.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 18; cf. also p. 88.

dores." [47] Like many of the mercantile writers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Swift appeared to accept the view that profit or loss to a nation engaged in foreign trade should be judged by particular balances resulting from trade with separate countries rather than by the general balance accruing to the nation. Thus he judges the trade with England bad, with France good, and so on, though it is not altogether evident that he thought seriously about the matter. The validity of judging by particular or general balance was being vigorously debated in his day, the proponents of the East India Company defending the Indian trade, despite its unfavorable balance, on the ground that it contributed in the long run to a favorable general balance for the nation at large.[48]

Swift accepts without qualification the prevalent mercantilist distinction between importations of manufactured and of raw materials. Although importations of any kind were ordinarily looked at askance as being economically disadvantageous, there were degrees of badness. Importation of manufactured articles was worse than importation of raw materials. Raw material at least provided employment for the native worker, thereby circulating money and increasing internal trade, whereas the importation of the finished product tended to draw bullion from the nation, thus decreasing its wealth. Particularly bad were those imported manufactured articles which competed with the domestic product. Thus John Cary wrote: ". . . 'tis a certain Rule, that so far as any Nation furnishes us with things already manufactured . . . so much less is our Advantage by the Trade we drive with them; especially if those Manufactures interfere with our own, and are purchased with Bullion." [49] He applies this rule specifically to England's trade

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-62. Swift's complaints about the scarcity of money need fuller investigation. His primary concern was the influence of such a condition on domestic trade. The mercantilists, too, complained frequently about the scarcity of money (see Heckscher, *op. cit.*, 2. 221 ff.; Lipson, *op. cit.*, 3. 68-69), which they related to rents, prices, employment, and, of course, to the effect on foreign trade. The problems involved receive full treatment in Arthur Eli Monroe, *Monetary Theory before Adam Smith* (Cambridge, Mass., 1923), Parts 4 and 5.

[48] See P. J. Thomas, *Mercantilism and the East India Trade* (London, 1926), pp. 8 ff.; cf. also on the matter of general and particular balances, Suviranta, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 ff., and Viner, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 ff.

[49] *Discourse on Trade, and Other Matters Relative to It* (London, 1745), p. 78. This is a rewriting of a work published in 1695.

with Spain, Turkey, and Portugal, which "are very advantagious, as they vend great Quantities of our Manufactures, and furnish us with Materials to be wrought up here" and to the African and West Indian trades, which are "most profitable to the Nation, as they imploy more of our People at Home." [50] In the widely circulated *British Merchant*, among the "general Maxims in Trade which are assented to by everybody," appeared the following:

> Foreign Materials, wrought up here into such Goods as would otherwise be imported ready manufactured, is a means of saving Money to the Nation; and if saving is getting, that Trade which procures such Materials ought to be look'd upon as profitable. . . .[51]
>
> That Trade is eminently bad, which supplies the same Goods as we manufacture our selves, especially if we can make enough for our Consumption. . . .[52]

In *The British Merchant* stress was laid on what was later called "the balance of employment." The argument was that those foreign countries which imported goods manufactured in England bought not merely these goods but also the labor engaged in making them. These foreign consumers thus contributed to the "Employment and Subsistence of our People." [53] On the other hand, when the English imported manufactured goods, England paid for the labor in the country which produced and manufactured these goods.

> If his [the laborer's or manufacturer's] whole Time is taken up in working for the Consumption of the *Portuguese*; for instance, if his whole Wages are paid him by that Nation, he gains from *Portugal* the whole Value of his yearly Labour. And the same thing must be said of the *Portuguese* Manufacturer that works for the Consumption of the *English* Nation; he clears his whole Wages from this Kingdom.[54]

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

[51] 1. 2. This and the following quotation were first printed in the 1721 edition of *The British Merchant*. They were originally published in Sir Theodore Janssen's *General Maxims of Trade* (London, 1713), pp. 6, 8.

[52] 1. 4. These are essentially the rules of trade set forth by William Wood in his *Survey of Trade* (London, 1718), pp. 224 ff. It is pleasant to observe that Swift and the man he attacked so violently in *The Drapier's Letters* are in fundamental agreement about foreign trade.

[53] 1. 18.

[54] 1. 29.

Thus, the writer argues, "It is certain, that all that the Consumption of *Portugal* pays to the English Labourers, more than is paid by the Consumption of *England* to the Labourers of *Portugal*, is clear Gain to England, and so much Loss to *Portugal*." [55]

Among the contemporary Irishmen who advanced these views was John Browne, whom Swift attacked violently in *The Drapier's Letters* and later forgave and praised for his public spirit.[56] As a preliminary to his discussion of Ireland's trade Browne laid down certain general maxims, among which were the following:

> That Trade is the least beneficial, which takes of the primums of Manufactures, and not the Manufactures themselves, because it deprives the People of matter to work upon, and gives it to Strangers, *et Vice Versa*, that Trade is more advantagious which takes off our Manufactures, than that which takes primum only, because it pays not only for the Produce of our Lands, but for the Art and Labour of our People also.
>
> It is better to buy the primums of Manufactures from abroad, than the Manufacture itself, because in the first Case, Value issues only for the Materials, but in the last, we must not only pay for the Materials, but for the Labour and Art also which brought them to perfection.[57]

The viewpoints expressed by these writers find unqualified acceptance in Swift. His most direct statement of the important distinction between manufactured and raw materials is presented in *A Short View of the State of Ireland*, where he lays down a set of maxims much in the manner of economic writers of the day. These are the "rules generally known, and never contradicted . . . of any country's flourishing and growing rich," three of which have an application to the point under discussion:

> The second, is the industry of the people in working up all their native commodities to the last degree of manufacture.
>
> The third, is the conveniency of safe ports and havens, to carry out their own goods, as much manufactured, and bring in those

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] See *Correspondence*, 4. 24 ff.; *The Drapier's Letters*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1935), pp. 226-28.

[57] *An Essay on Trade in General; and, on That of Ireland in Particular* (Dublin, 1728), p. 29.

of others, as little manufactured as the nature of mutual commerce will allow.

. . . . . .

The fourteenth, is a disposition of the people of a country to wear their own manufactures, and import as few incitements to luxury, either in clothes, furniture, food or drink as they possibly can live conveniently without.[58]

The same principles are pervasive in the Irish tracts, applied particularly to manufactured goods shipped in from England. With the Irish parliament powerless, where England was concerned, to impose duties or prohibit importations, Swift realized that appeals had to be made to the Irish people. Accordingly, with the publication of *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufactures* in 1720, he began a campaign to persuade the Irish that their economic welfare depended upon a drastic reduction in their use of foreign commodities. He made shrewd use of patriotic feelings and resentment against England's restrictive policies to enforce his economic plea. In this first tract is also evident an appeal to readers who recognize the validity of the common mercantilist view that importation of manufactured articles hinders home industry whereas the substitution of a native product encourages domestic manufacturers, increases employment, stimulates internal trade, and reduces the flow of money abroad. Thus he pleaded with the Irish to wear only cloths of Irish growth and manufacture. The women are told that they will look as handsome in Irish " stuffs " as in imported brocades. The wearers of silks, velvets, calicoes—all imported and finished materials—ought to be considered enemies of the nation. Here, too, is the first of several appeals to the Irish clergy to utilize only native cloths in their habits. The economic disadvantage of sending out raw materials to be manufactured and then imported in the finished product is clearly implied in his ironic treatment of the grievances that " poor England suffers by impositions from Ireland." One project on foot to relieve the distress of England is the shipment of Ireland's " best wheaten straw " to Dunstable, to be made up into straw hats which the Irish will be obliged by law to import.[59]

[58] *Works*, 7. 83, 84.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

The mercantilist bias was persistent thereafter. In the Drapier's *Seventh Letter* Swift complained that the importation of "Indian stuffs, and calicoes" has been profitable to England and "an unconceivable loss to us; forcing the weavers to beg in our streets," [60] an obvious bias against importations on the ground that they do not provide employment for home laborers. The same principle is involved in his remark on wool: "Our own wool returned upon us, in English manufactures, to our infinite shame and damage; and the great advantage of England." [61] He was particularly urgent in 1728 and 1729, when a succession of bad harvests aggravated Ireland's difficulties, that the "ruinous importation of foreign luxury and vanity" be stopped and that the Irish "utterly discard all importations which are not absolutely necessary for health or life." [62] In *A Proposal That All Ladies Should Appear in Irish Manufacturers* he stressed the economic evil of imported manufactured products in which foreign labor is embodied. He computed that Ireland imports annually "ninety thousand pounds worth of silk, whereof the greater part is manufactured." "I allow," he added, "that the thrown and raw silk is less pernicious, because we have some share in the manufacture." [63] The principle is given ironic statement in the *Answer to the Craftsman*, where he wrote that England "may very reasonably demand the benefit of all our commodities in their natural growth, to be manufactured by their people, and a sufficient quantity of them for our use to be returned hither fully manufactured." [64]

In mercantilist literature the economic prejudice against importations in general is intensified in the case of importations of luxuries. Although there was some dissent or qualification, it was commonly believed that imported luxuries were economically indefensible. Sir Josiah Child wrote that "*Luxury* and *Prodigality* are as well prejudicial to *Kingdoms* as to Private *Families;* and that the expense of Foreign Commodities . . . is the worst expence a Nation can be inclinable to." [65]

[60] *Works*, 6.189.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Works*, 7.138, 124.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 199.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 223; cf. also p. 222.
[65] *A Discourse of Trade* (London, 1698), Preface, p. [vi].

Much criticism of England's trade with France was based on the supposedly harmful economic effects of importing luxuries. Thus John Cary wrote: " . . . the *French* Trade is certainly our Loss, *France* being like a Tavern, with whom we spend what we get by other Nations and 'tis strange, we should be so bewitcht to that People, as to take off their Growth, which consists chiefly of things for Luxury, and receive a Value only for the Esteem we put on them." [66] Both Sir Theodore Janssen and William Wood assented to the general maxim, " That the importing *Commodities* of *mere Luxury*, is so much *real Loss* to the Nation as they amount to." [67] To these writers and others, luxuries were economic evils because they were usually manufactured products and thus embodied foreign labor. Similar attacks appeared in Irish journals and tracts. " The next thing I shall mention, highly prejudicial to Trade," wrote Arthur Dobbs, " is, our Luxury and Extravagance in Food, Dress, Furniture and Equipage." " What is spent in Luxury," he adds, " is just so much lost to the Nation in the way of Trade: For if it be in foreign commodities, it increases our imports; and if in the things of our own Country . . . it lessens our Exports." [68] The author of *An Inquiry into Some of the Causes of the Ill Situation of Ireland* (1732) complained bitterly that the Irish send to foreign markets " the Necessaries of Life, and bring home Trifles; for Instance we send to *France Butter* and *Beef*. . . . In Return of these Necessaries, what do we import from *France* of any Value, but *Vanities for our Backs, Diseases for our Bodies, and Poverty and Idleness for our Manufacturers and Husbandmen*? " [69] In Bishop Berkeley's *The Querist*, the attack on imported luxuries is a persistent note. Two queries may be taken as representative. " Whether an Irish lady, set out with French silks and Flanders lace, may not be said to consume more beef and butter than a hundred of our laboring peasants? " " Whether it be possible for this country to grow rich, so long as what is made by domestic industry is spent in foreign luxury? " [70]

[66] *A Discourse on Trade, and Other Matters*, pp. 79-80. Cf. also John Pollexfen, *A Discourse of Trade and Coyn* (London, 1697; 2d ed., 1700), pp. 92 ff.

[67] *The British Merchant*, 1.3; Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 225.

[68] *An Essay on the Trade of Ireland* (London, 1731), Part 2, pp. 41-42.

[69] P. 52.

[70] Part I, No. 150; Part II, No. 226. For additional attacks on luxury by Irish

To these voices Swift added his. Among the rules he laid down to make a country rich is the " disposition of the people . . . to wear their own manufactures, and import as few incitements to luxury, either in clothes, furniture, food or drink as they possibly can live conveniently without." [71] In his sermon on Ireland's economic condition he referred to the importation of luxuries as " another cause of our low condition," [72] and he wrote with animus, in the *Letter to the Archbishop of Dublin Concerning the Weavers*, against the " vanity and luxury " of Irish women who deplete the nation's stock of money by their purchases of such importations as tea, coffee, chocolate, laces, silks, and calicoes—all " unwholesome drugs, and unnecessary finery." [73] In another tract he catalogued and computed the value of the " ruinous importations of foreign luxury and vanity," [74] but pleaded for the continued importation of wine without duties on the ground that the people of no other nation are " more in want of some cordial to keep up their spirits, than in this of ours." [75] Swift did not elaborate his objection to the importations of luxuries as distinct from other importations. Actually he tended to identify all importations as luxuries since Ireland could afford none; with the case against importations of any kind so strong, the case against imported luxuries was too obvious to need elaborated argument. It is of interest that Swift kept his argument against luxuries wholly on the economic level. Moral considerations did not enter the discussion.[76] He called for frugality and consumption of native products in the interests of native industries, without emphasizing that prodigality and high living were, as many mercantilists believed, in some special way corrupting and thus conducive to national weakness. Yet he did not align himself with

writers, see *The Dublin Journal*, No. 37, Dec. 11, 1725; *The Tribune*, Nos. 5 and 12, 1729; *The Present State of Ireland Consider'd* (Dublin and London, 1730), pp. 21-23; Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland* (Dublin, 1738; 1816), Resolutions VIII, IX, X, XXX.

[71] *Works*, 7. 84.

[72] *Works*, 4. 213.

[73] *Works*, 7. 140.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[76] But see *Works*, 7. 124, where he seems to combine the moral and economic arguments. The intention is economic.

those writers on trade who maintained that " 'tis no wrong to the Commonwealth, if men of estates drink, drab, live profusely, and dye beggars, as long as every penny comes to the natives. . . . The mischief only is, when forraigners are the better for this disorder, for that does insensibly ruine the Commonwealth." [77]

In the Drapier's *Seventh Letter* Swift listed among the " wishes of the nation " that the Irish parliament would declare " by some unanimous and hearty votes, against wearing any silk or woollen manufactures, imported from abroad." [78] He expressed the same hope in the first of the Irish economic tracts and at least twice in tracts written in 1729.[79] As a matter of fact, the Irish parliament had passed resolutions against importation in 1703, 1705, and 1707, the wording of the first of which gives the impression that Swift had taken it as the theme of his *Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*:

> *Resolved, Nemine Contradicente.* That by Reason of the Great Decay of Trade and Discouragement of Exportation of the Manufactures of this Kingdom, many poor Tradesmen are reduced to extream Want and Beggary. Resolved, Nemine Contradicente, That it will greatly conduce to the Relief of said Poor, and to the Good of the Kingdom, that the Inhabitants thereof should use more of the Manufactures of this Kingdom in their Apparel, and the Furniture of their Homes.[80]

What effect these resolutions had may easily be inferred. Swift may or may not have known of them; in any case it is difficult to believe that he had any faith in the efficacy of such resolutions. His was, of course, anything but a lone voice pleading for wider use of native products and for decreased importations, as an examination of the pages of *The Dublin Journal* and *The Tribune* and of the tracts of such public-spirited Irishmen as Berkeley and Madden will reveal.[81]

[77] Thomas Manley, *Usury at Six Per Cent. Examined* (London, 1669), Preface, p. [9].

[78] *Works*, 4. 199.

[79] *Works*, 7. 19, 143, 199.

[80] *Journal of the House of Commons of Ireland*, 2. 407. See also Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[81] See *The Dublin Journal*, No. 25, Dec. 11, 1725; *The Tribune*, No. 12, 1729; *The Present State of Ireland Consider'd* (Dublin and London, 1730), pp. 27 ff.; Madden, *op. cit.*, Resolution VIII.

In his pleas for reduced importations Swift used, in support of his arguments, an analogy from personal finance. This analogy, of long standing in mercantilist theory, assumed the resemblance between the income of an individual and that of a nation. Just as an individual spending in excess of his income threatens himself with debt, poverty, and eventual ruin, so does a nation whose importations exceed exportations tend toward the same condition by virtue of the decrease in its treasure. The analogy was widely used, and in Swift's own library it was to be found in the economic writings of Sir William Temple and John Locke.[82] The statement of it by John Pollexfen, one of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, is representative:

> It is with Nations as with Families: Those Masters that are careful and good Husbands themselves, and keep their Servants to their Labour, and frugal in their Expences, generally thrive most; so with Nations, those that have the most Industrious People, and are most Parsimonious, will be the Richest. . . .
>
> A Gentleman that hath but 500 *l per Annum*, that is Industrious with his Servants in Husbandry, and content with his own, for Food and Apparel, and careful to avoid unnecessary Outgoings and Expences, may bring Money into his House and keep it too; but a Gentleman that hath 1000 *l per Annum*, that keeps Idle Servants, despises his own Food and Cloathing, and instead thereof takes in Silks, Wines, and dear bought Commodities from Abroad in the room of them, at the end of the Year either cannot bring Money into his House, or not keep it long because of his Debts: The same with Nations that . . . despise their own Commodities, and are fond of those that are far fetcht, and dear bought. That undeniable Maxim, *That the way to be Rich is to be careful in Saving, as well as industrious in Getting*, hath the same reference to Nations as to particular Persons, or Families.[83]

Swift uses the analogy several times. In the *Letter to the Archbishop of Dublin Concerning the Weavers* he wrote:

> If a private gentelman's income be sunk irretrievably for ever from a hundred pounds to fifty, and that he hath no other method

[82] See *The Works of Sir William Temple* (London, 1731), 1.65; John Locke, *Some Consideration of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and the Raising of the Value of Money*, in *Works* (1824), 4.19-20. Cf. also Charles Davenant, *An Essay on Ways and Means of Supplying the War*, in *Political and Commercial Works* (1771), 1.13; Sir Francis Brewster, *Essay on Trade and Navigation* (London, 1695), p. 51.

[83] Pollexfen, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

to supply the deficiency, I desire to know . . . whether such a person hath any other course to take than to sink half his expenses in every article of economy, to save himself from ruin and the gaol. Is not this more than doubly the case of Ireland . . . ? Therefore instead of dreams and projects for the advancing of trade, we have nothing left but to find out some expedient whereby we may reduce our expenses to our incomes.[84]

Even on occasion where he does not make overt use of the analogy, Swift appears to think of the economy of a nation as being that of a family or individual writ large.

From the assembled evidence it is reasonable to conclude that Swift was fully aware of the importance of both the trading and the landed interests in the economy of a nation. His awareness of their relationship is evident throughout the Irish tracts, where he frequently mingles proposals for both. There is a sense of urgency in his discussion of the problems of trade, significantly not less strong than in his discussions of the problems of agriculture. Of the extent of his reading in economic literature and of his knowledge, there is not much to be said. His library, with only a few works in the field,[85] suggests that his reading was in no way extended, though we need not assume that his reading was limited to books he owned or preserved. It would be utter folly to make serious claims for Swift as an economic thinker. He utilized the same pleas and arguments to be found in such Irish contemporaries as Berkeley, Prior, Dobbs, Browne, and in the Irish journals. The atmosphere was thick with the assumptions of mercantilism, and these he accepted without criticism, applying them to Ireland. It was not part of his purpose to be either systematic or independent; he was simply adapting the commonly accepted principles of the day to an instance of special pleading, using invective, irony, cajolery—all the arts of attack and persuasion so manifest in his political and religious writings—to mitigate Ireland's plight.

[84] *Works*, 7. 139; cf. also pp. 124-25, 195.

[85] Cf. Harold Williams, *Dean Swift's Library* (Cambridge, Eng., 1932), Sales Catalogue, Nos. 276, 288, 296, 300, 412, 435, 444.

The reader of the Irish tracts is likely to suffer from the delusion—perhaps intentionally created by Swift—that Ireland's case was unique, that Ireland was an isolated instance, a country singled out by England for oppression and restrictive measures. It is important to correct this impression by viewing the economic legislation as part of the trend toward protectionism which became increasingly a dominant aspect of mercantilism in the last part of the seventeenth century. "All the Nations of *Europe* . . . concur in this *Maxim*," wrote an author in *The British Merchant*, "That the less they consume of foreign Commodities, the better it is for them." [86] The logic of this position necessitated the discouragement of imports, and England applied this logic to India, to France, to its colonies in America, as well as to Ireland, "its best and noblest Colony," to use the words of Charles Davenant. The English woolen industry that acted as a pressure group to force the Act against Ireland in 1699 is not to be distinguished from the woolen industry that fought violently against the East India trade and achieved the protection for home industries enacted in 1700. The conceptions of national self-interest and self-sufficiency rooted deeply in mercantilist thought dictated a policy towards Ireland's competitive industries not to be distinguished from the policies toward the competitive industries of Turkey or Spain. Religious and political issues cut athwart English economic policies in the treatment of Ireland; but the fundamental fact is that the English, in their desire to secure the national welfare by vigorous protection of home industries, looked upon Ireland as a dependency which must not be permitted to become a trade rival. It was the situation created by this attitude that gives meaning to almost everything Swift wrote concerning the trade of Ireland.

In the last analysis Swift, it may be freely admitted, was an ardent defender of the landed interest. "I ever abominated," he wrote to Pope in 1722, "that scheme of politics . . . of setting up a moneyed interest in opposition to the landed: for I conceived, there could not be a truer maxim in our government than this, that the possessors of the soil are the best judges of what is for the advantage of the kingdom." [87] These words

[86] 1.14.

[87] *Correspondence*, 3.121.

echo what he had written a decade earlier in his reference to an " acknowledged maxim " of the Whig party " as dangerous to the constitution as any I have mentioned; I mean, that of preferring, on all occasions, the moneyed interest before the landed." [88] Nor can the reader of the Irish tracts ignore the persistent emphasis embodied in the statement that " There is not an older or more uncontroverted maxim in the politics of all wise nations, than that of encouraging agriculture." [89] What must be guarded against, in the interest of a better balanced conception of Swift, is permitting these statements to obscure the fact that he recognized the importance of trade, particularly after 1714. The Swift of *The Examiner* who " never fail'd to maul " trade was transformed into a person who realized that great benefits would accrue to Ireland if she were permitted liberty of trade.

The University of Chicago

[88] *Works*, 9.231.
[89] *Works*, 7.134.